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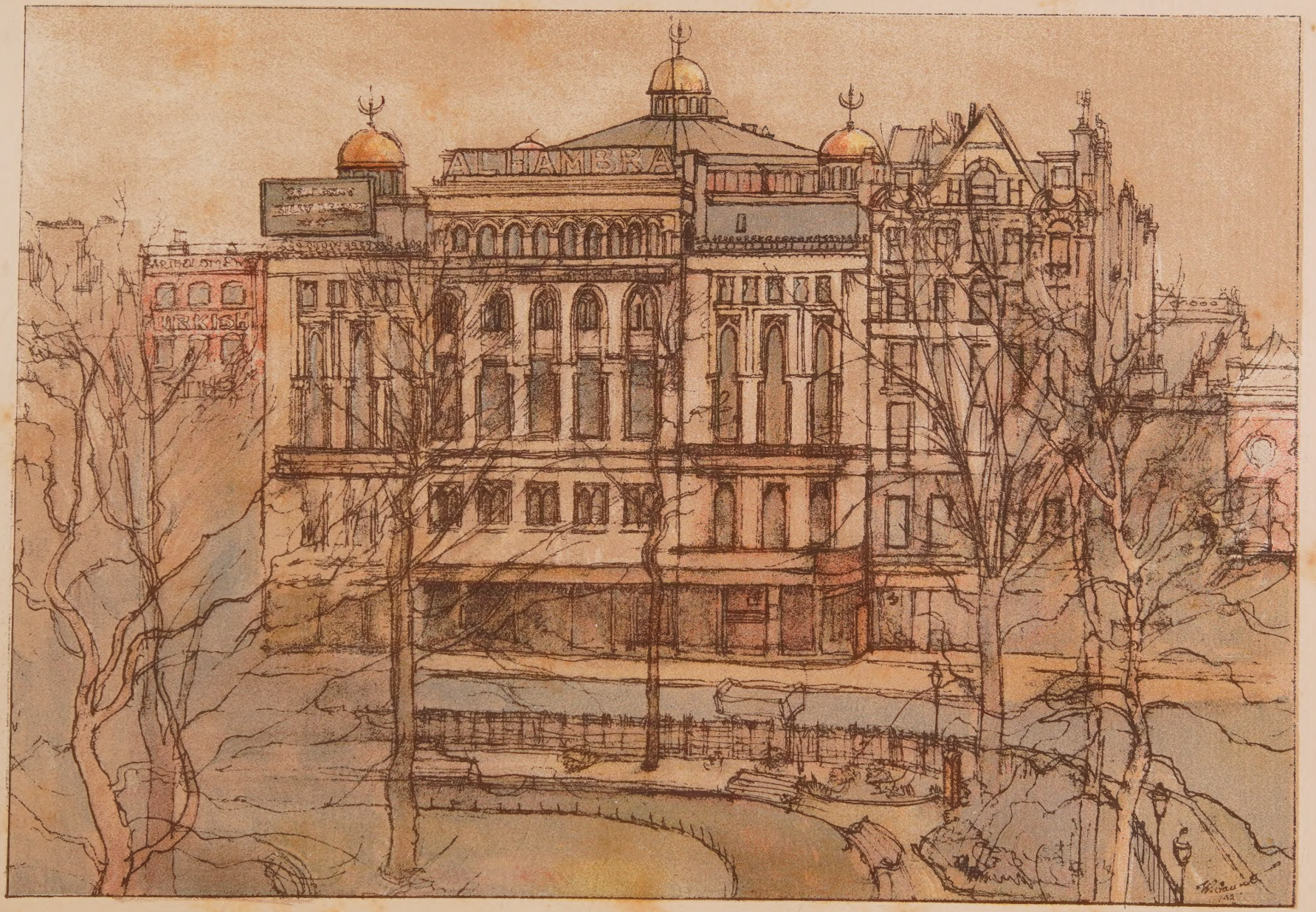
LONDON PROMENADE

Printed in Great Britain by Herbert Reiach Ltd., 43 Belvedere Road, S.E.1. Offset plates in colour and half-tone by Vincent Brooks, Day and Son, Ltd., 48 Parker St., London, W.C.2.


ALHAMBRA
TURKISH

LONDON PROMENADE

Written and illustrated

by

W. GAUNT

THE STUDIO LIMITED

44 Leicester Square, London

1930

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INTRODUCTION

This is a book on London which seems to me to do something that has not been attempted before, or at all events not in the present age—namely, to give a description of the informal life of the City, with its music halls, taverns, chop-houses, cafés, clubs, meeting places

of Society, Bohemian resorts, etc., etc., as it appears to the mind of one impartial onlooker.

It is not the conventional guide-book, with photographs and paragraphs about Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's: nor yet a book about those nooks in the Inns of Court or those pageants in Whitehall which have either a purely antiquarian or a purely ceremonial interest: but lifts, so to speak, the lid from the hive: and enables you to see London in a complete cross-section with all kinds of activities going on at the same time.

One may find some analogy to London Promenade *in those books of lively drawings popular at the beginning of the last century,* The Microcosm of London, *by Pugin and Rowlandson, for instance. From another point of view, by its swift movement from place to place and the varied and overlapping impressions which it contains, it suggests the characteristically modern medium of the film.*

The native, indigenous London, with its folk-songs and folk-humour, its peculiar architecture, its superb indifference to the rest of the world, its countless strange types is the main theme. This is the London which (alas!) seems to be passing away, and this the author faithfully chronicles. And yet the traditional London is not seen with a complete abandonment of the time sense, but in the post-war atmosphere, and such phenomena as cocktails and the

bright young people remind us that London is definitely in the twentieth century.

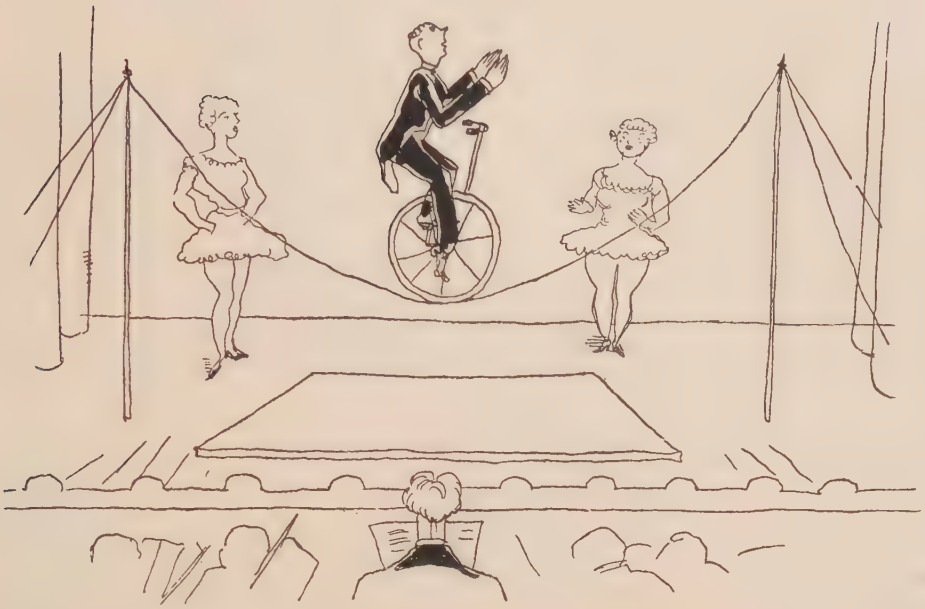
In one of his essays the author uses the phrase "The moment is historic." And really it is! Probably we have never realised so poignantly and consciously before to-day the flavour and the glamour of the London of the nineties and of Edwardian days. And yet, as the twentieth century moves on, the flavour and the individuality seem, bit by bit, to be slipping away from us; although, as the author shows us, many hardy though obscure institutions still persist.

In ten years' time, Mr. Gaunt's book may become an historical document, the diary, graphic in the literal double meaning of the word, of one who in 1930 saw London with the ironical eyes of a post-war young man who was born in 1900, with the boundless curiosity of one who was born not within the sound of Bow Bells but in Yorkshire, and with that attachment to lost or beleaguered causes which may be traced to some years spent within the academic cloisters of Oxford.

At all events, here is London as it is, London with a flavour of Vauxhall Gardens and Dickens, of Marie Lloyd and Edwardian pomp, of the naughty nineties and of the twenties, for which the characteristic epithet remains to be filled in by posterity.

C. GEOFFREY HOLME

THE ALHAMBRA



One would have liked to write about the Alhambra as a music-hall, the perfect music-hall.

On the one hand, a delicious architectural absurdity, creation of Owen Jones, author of the Grammar of Ornament, a grammar of ornament in itself, with Moorish cupolas and crescents delicately piercing our heavy, northern air.

On the other, a shrine of folk-melody and humour.

Improbable in every detail, it has a little of Granada and a little of Phil May in its composition. Or had—for the second ingredient is becoming a memory. The pen poises in mid-air, about to write of Marie Lloyd, of vulgarity, strident, infectious, captivating. The images of strange gods have just appeared on its façade.

ALL THE STARS

But not the homely stars of the London firmament, the fixed and kindly planets of Lancashire and the Mile End Road.

Stars scintillating from afar, in the new cosmic order of Hollywood.

MUSIC HALL
BAR

This picture is not meant to be looked at by Mr. Hannen Swaffer. It depicts Revelry at the back of the circle.

A Fairyland with Mauresque trimmings where the Young Men about Town assemble.

Its mirrors reflect infinite corridors of Moorish arches, cusped, pointed and intricately ornamented.

And it is a mainstay of those who like the music-hall but have a prejudice against actors.

It becomes crowded about the time the soprano is soaring upwards towards the top note.

It is terrific on Boat Race night.

The hearty set of Oxford and Cambridge (with one or two intruders perhaps, from Oxford Street and Cambridge Circus), of Sandhurst, Osborne, and Jermyn Street, greet one another like explorers meeting unexpectedly in some wild part of Africa. They exchange jokes with the barmaids in the ninetyish manner.

And there are other and more modern young men, dressed all too beautifully, slim of waist and smooth of cheek, sleek and perfumed and with curled hair.

Conversational Fragments

" Agnes, you know I love you . . . "
" Oh, go on with your nonsense, Mr. George do——te-he . . . "
" My dear, he didn't even take the trouble to be rude to me . . . "
" How aw-ful for you . . . "

DEMOLITION
BY
ST MARY'S
WHARF

THE OLD EMPIRE

In the picture the Old Empire is to be seen cowering between a drapery store and the Gambrinus, awaiting its fate.

The redoubt of old-fashioned amusement has been stormed and the contractor's sign is hung out like an epitaph.

The *Zeitgeist* has proved more effective than Father Bernard Vaughan and the film magnates have completed the attack begun by the Church.

Some of the atmosphere of London is being carted away in wheelbarrows. Gone those delirious nights when lights were blurred in the fog, and ghostly hansom-cabs jingled to and fro, and toffs were toffs and the lower classes genial but indisputably lower.

Gone the Empire Promenade—the barbaric pageant of an age when Sin and Immaturity still existed.

When heavily-whiskered gentlemen, mumbling ornate walking-sticks, ogled through their monocles the somewhat maternal and elderly ladies who were distinguished from other ladies by the fact that they painted their faces.

There exist only the bare ruined choirs where late the chorus swung plump flesh-coloured tights and revealed enchanting glimpses

Page 8. *Shakespeare House, Leicester Square, demolished in* 1929

of their persons amidst a cascade of lace.

The modern tempo is so quick that the brief space of ten years has become like the long-drawn span of a century.

A legend is created overnight : and barely has the first pick struck against this sanctified proscenium before the topical playwrights begin to write of the Empire as if it were the Globe Theatre in Southwark.

Let us compose a brief biography.

Born 1887, this theatre speedily associated itself with the dissolute young men about town amongst whom its dashing appearance and reckless manners gave it the position of a leader. It suddenly became old, having blazed away its spendthrift youth in a very short time and quietly departed this life to the regret of such of its boon companions as survived in the year, 1927.

THEATRE

THE NEW EMPIRE AND "QUEEN'S"

The new Empire is a Broadway adaptation of the old.

It has splendour with an American accent.

As is right and proper in a place of amusement Pompeii and Versailles have contributed to its magnificence.

Iced water is on tap : as well as the pictures on the screen there are pictures in real gilt frames that might have graced an Academy of 1880 ; and from an antique smoking-room panelled in dark wood one may proceed into ultra modern lavatories gleaming with the whitest of marble.

Its exterior is nevertheless discreet when compared to that of its neighbour. The Queen's Hotel is a sort of Renaissance palace that you might find in a picture by Turner, defying every canon of architecture and shimmering in the " light that never was on land or sea "—this being the kind of light that London provides.

The atmosphere of London is sympathetic to flights of fancy.

The vaporous air asks only for silhouette.

The sun plays an æsthetic trick with mechanical ornament. And in a moment Nature, amiable and erratic old Romantic Artist, a celestial Whistler to be imagined in peg-top trousers and with an eyeglass, turns the north side of Leicester Square into a baffling inscrutable dream.

5 FAÇADES OF LEICESTER SQUARE

Prose and poetry side by side.

A series of episodes from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which make up a curious harmony of dissimilar styles and an imposing silhouette.

At the corner a modest little bit of stucco over a restaurant. Next door to it a dainty architectural romance of about 1903, with mullioned bay-windows of stone and a top story that rises to a pediment. This is The Studio building, whose neighbour supplies the dominant architectural note of this side of the square. Swashbuckling, and full of braggadoccio, it seems to inflate its chest and proudly display the decorations which an ingenious architect with an admiration for the Tudor style and an unbridled imagination has lavished upon it.

Abruptly the eye descends to fall upon a sober gentlemanly building of the eighteenth century. This is the house once inhabited by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and now an auction room. Its plain windows, solid railings and general air of majestic restraint and common sense conjure up a Georgian world. One imagines solid dignified figures in plum coloured coats and knee breeches, gravely taking snuff. Dr. Johnson, David Garrick, come to see their friend, the first portrait painter of the age.

The vision is speedily dispelled by the next façade, which has gone back at the pleasure of a twentieth-century architect into the Middle Ages, changing again at the corner into the "British Empire style," ferro-concrete and a dash of Renaissance.

No two buildings are the same height or alike in any of their details. It is not merely one side of a square but a row of faces. Each one is a species of portrait, and one naturally ascribes to it human rather than architectural attributes.

This is one of the reasons why the appearance of London is radically different from that of all other cities in the world.

As a miscellany it is incomparable.

W Barnett
1925

ORATORY IN LEICESTER STREET

The orator is one of the institutions of London.

He represents the great principle of freedom of eloquence. The English race is quite impervious to eloquence, so the police don't mind.

If he began to sway his audience he might perhaps get " run in." But he does not sway his audience and this does not worry him to any degree.

The orator is an egotist and all he cares about is his crowded hour of glorious talk. He is quite willing to address an empty street. It is understood that it is just a game. It wouldn't be " cricket " to start real trouble. The Anti-Catholic would hate a massacre of Catholics : but he must get his grievance out of his system.

Sometimes the mysterious powers of the modern world may pay him a little money for his semblance of agitation. Most often he seems to do it for pure love of his own voice.

He walks up together with an assistant who carries a mineral-water box, and a wad of papers. He stands on the mineral-water box and, taking a firm hold of the papers, proceeds to tell the world.

A small boy is the first arrival. He stands for some time waiting for a row to start. Disappointed in this he dives away, whistling. Gradually a number of people collect. They will listen gravely to any subject. The villainies of the vivisector, the dire results of vaccination, the failure of the Government, and the turning of the wicked into hell receive the same polite, academic interest.

They seem most to admire the audacity of a man who can make himself conspicuous.

They like to watch him perched on the slight eminence of his box, which isolates him from ordinary man.

They are pleased when he lashes himself into fury. Policemen with their thumbs in their belts, rock slightly on the pavement and smile indulgently.

" Wot a lark!"

There is an old gentleman who stands perfectly still without any sign of being conscious, looking fixedly away from the orator.

He is like a cat whose head is being stroked.

He loves the vibration set up by words.

You almost expect him to begin to purr.

The oration finishes. The crowd is absorbed in the impersonal motion of Coventry Street.

Everything is just the same.

Vivisectionists continue their experiments. Arms are still infected with cowpox. The Government does not totter more than is usual, and the wicked go gaily along the primrose path.

But you imagine the orator, soothed and proud, returning home and enjoying his supper, and telling his family with the pardonable vanity of the public man how he " knocked them " in Leicester Street.

Hampstead on a Sunday afternoon, and, *Page* 19, *the Empire in Hyde Park*

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHERS IN LEICESTER SQUARE GARDENS

Leicester Square is a sort of monastery garden in the West End.

Once you have passed through its gates peacefulness steals over you The noises of the street a few yards away become remote and the buses that flash by the trees might be in another world. Innumerable birds set up a shrill chorus among the plane leaves, like small actors determined to create the illusion that this is the depth of the country. And its presiding figure adds to the impression of a calm detachment. Shakespeare, with dome-like brow, in the attitude which the nineteenth century considered most appropriate to dramatic art, leans on a pedestal and points inexorably to a scroll.

Pigeons perch with cheerful irreverence on his head, and the benevolent figure seems to muse with some degree of self-satisfaction on the neatness of his parable of life that is here daily repeated.

At first the infant riding a tricycle round the paths, shrieking with joy at its speed, and very reckless at the curves.

And then the worker in an office, a young woman with a paper bag of buns gossiping with her own kind about what he said and didn't say. And then the keeper of a little shop in a side street, fat, middle-aged and placid, reading his newspaper, and taking a little air.

Page 20. Passers-by in Green Street

Last scene of all, and rather more conspicuous than the others in Leicester Square, is that of lean and slippered age.

Strange phantoms, with heads bent and resigned, shuffling steps, pace its miniature groves.

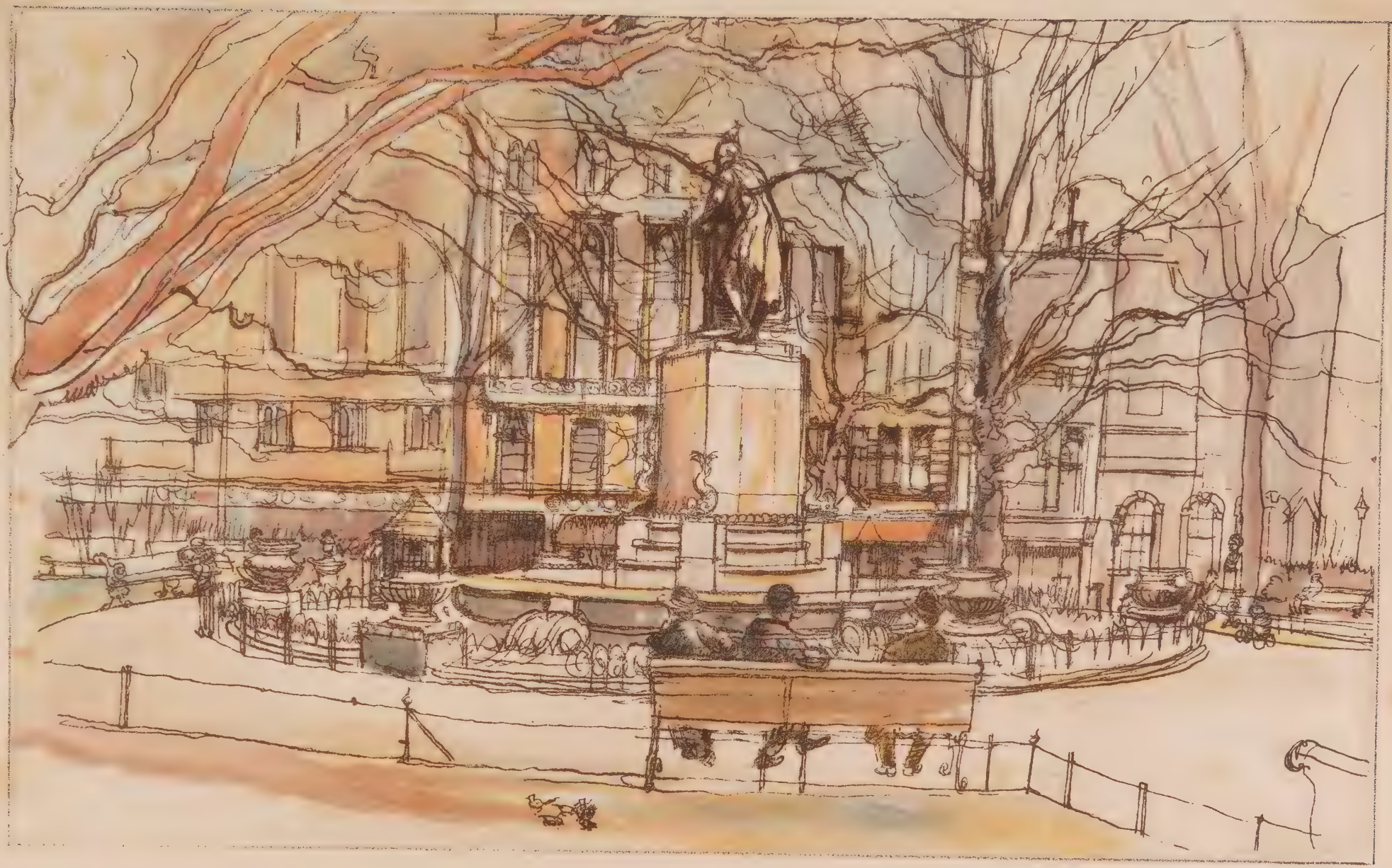
There are old women with bonnets awry, and pathetic dirty faces who sleep in doorways in Orange Street and the Charing Cross Road, and sing in the streets with an appalling quaver in their voices.

Old men with long overcoats which always have the collar turned up and have become iridescent with the passage of years ; with drooping white moustaches stained lemon yellow : and parchment faces set in the final peace of despair : picking up now and then the stub of a cigarette. But within the square no one is exactly sad : soporific rather, lulled by its slightly absurd enchantment.

Two Glimpses.

An autumn morning. Trees rising faintly out of the mist. A wisp of smoke that comes from a heap of smouldering leaves. A taxi-cab with the morning dew on it. And a ruddy-faced man in leggings who looks like a gamekeeper, sweeping the paths with a broom of twigs.

Summer evening. A little bell tolls. The lay monks and nuns file out. The gates are closed. The sky goes deep blue. The square has become indistinct, a mystery. And Shakespeare is left alone with the electric signs.



Danse Nègre with a flavour
of Seven Dials.

AT R. E. JONES'S

Members of " the profession " may frequently be seen here.

Down in the basement bar-restaurant beer mugs are poised over blue chins and resonant voices declaim.

Gentlemen with baroque overcoats, and white spats stand talking together in incredibly cultured accents and laughing with the unnatural gusto proper to the stage. Their large suit cases are placed on the floor beside them, giving the impression that they are just about to start on a tour of the provinces or have perhaps just extricated themselves from the clutches of some too importunate landlady.

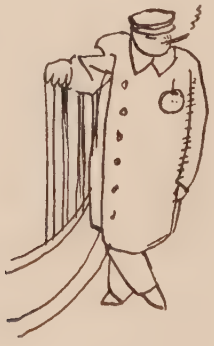
The old Thespian who looks like Irving, with glasses hung on wide black cord, and some of the grand tragic manner in every movement, stalks slowly along the crowd, greatness condescending, to seek, perhaps, an ear receptive to the story which time cannot stale, of Hamlet once played by genius to a full house.

Ladies who may belong to the chorus diligently heighten their charms from boxes of powder and with sticks of rouge.

Everyone enacts the part of a very select assemblage " discovered " in a fashionable restaurant. Young men, possibly with small Society roles, droop courteously over the chairs of blasé young women, relishing their lines of " small talk."

Virile types boom in rich bass tones, and others, the fashionables who are perpetually on the Riviera in musical comedy, flute to one another in what has come to be known as the Oxford manner.

A histrionic animation pervades the scene.



THE NIGHT CLUB

This night (or so-called social) club was a real one.

A sort of Masonic Lodge for night-owls.

It was wrapped in authentic mystery.

Down a narrow side street, faced by a blank wall amongst the grim blank fronts of doomed and deserted houses, a very short distance from Leicester Square. A furtive brass plate covered with verdigris was the only sign of its actually existing behind a sombre and forbidding façade.

Everything would seem dead in the narrow street down which footsteps echoed strangely. An innocent-looking and fresh-faced policeman at the corner seemed wrapped in some aloof dream.

The bell rang silently so that for a long time the visitor could not know whether it had rung or not or, if it had sounded, whether anyone

Page 28. The other sort of club

heard. And then footsteps seemed to creep and struggle behind the door, and the scrutiny of a human eye could be felt rather than seen. Instinctively one's attention was drawn to a dark loophole whence an appraisal was being made.

The door silently admitted and noiselessly closed. The thrill of complete darkness.

A struggle of dim underground light as the second door in the line of defences was opened. A gingerly descent down steep stairs at the bottom of which snarled an Alsatian wolf-dog.

And there you were in the Aladdin's cave of London after midnight. In Paris or Berlin, in such a mysterious underground setting, you might find dancing, an orchestra, elaborate effects, American visitors.

Here simply serious-minded natives of the city, brooding over an illegal whisky and soda in the atmosphere of a Turkish bath.

Occasionally a heavy figure would slowly get up, place a shilling in an automatic machine, press a lever and wait for his shilling to be returned many-fold. This happened infrequently. The gambler would lose several shillings, contemplate the machine for a while, and heavily return to his meditations.

The *night-life* in the cosmopolitan sense, the nervous itch of a post-war generation, this sad and surreptitious pleasure of the Englishman, could hardly be called. But it had the true Anglo-Saxon secret of exclusiveness, the fascination of being difficult to get into, and contained strange types, fat wheezy men with money to burn, pallid waiters taking a busman's holiday in order to forget the misery of their existence, youths reluctant to go to bed, and a few Australians and Irish with a natural taste for breaking regulations and seeking to pierce the granite barriers of English life.

The Supreme Figure of the place was the old man who kept the door, who would sit on the stairs, like a weary Mephistopheles. Vanitas Vanitatum was in his every gesture and the contemptuous wrinkles on his brow seemed to indicate that he saw through everything—both his clients and the law—and had only one thing to look forward to—the morning hour when he could sleep.

SAUSAGE
RESTAURANT

WHITCOMB STREET

There are several village streets round the hub of the universe. Whitcomb Street is one of them.

The great world of theatres, offices, department stores, and tube stations is at the next turning : and here, whence one would have thought the intense energy of modern times would long ago have wrested it, is a placid leisured sub-world that has a rural completeness and self-sufficiency.

Within a few yards you can find the means of satisfying every ordinary need. You can buy fresh bread from the baker's, have your shoes mended at the local cobbler's, buy a newspaper from one of those low-ceilinged little shops where papers, sweets and cigarettes are all mixed up together, take a drink at the village inn and obtain your butter and bacon at a sort of village grocer's.

The village worthies become familiar and even the commissionaires from Ciro's club seem to partake of the local and rustic nature of the place.

You almost expect to meet some gnarled old man who will say with a shake of his venerable head and patriarchal beard, " Ay, sir, I were born and bred in Whitcomb Street and never left it these forty years. Piccadilly ? No, I've never been there, though they do say as its a wunnerful place."

As is natural in so small a community, the relation between the shop keepers and their customer is a personal one. They have time to spare for the details of existence, for an interchange of slight amenities, a discussion on this and that.

You are not merely one of a vast purchasing crowd hurrying, quickly forgotten, a mechanical repetition in a series, each of which brings the employee nearer to six o'clock and suburbs : but an event, a ripple in a calm pool, a human being.

This little wedge of domestic London lies between Trafalgar Square and Leicester Square.

You have the sense that people actually live here and are perhaps proud of the fact that Charles II played tennis in the neighbourhood.

These domestic oases have no place in the scheme of things. They are irrational in a city where space is valued in inches :

But they help to keep it alive.

Page 35. Roof vista near Coventry Street

THE LEICESTER LOUNGE TRANSFORMED

A persistent vision obtrudes itself before the eyes of Coventry Street in the days of George R. Sims—specifically of George R. Sims, whose vanishing genius faintly hovers over the West End of London at many points. Like an illustration to an early number of the Strand Magazine, a wash drawing appears on the retina, of ladies with leg of mutton sleeves who pick up their trailing skirts to avoid the mud splashed by horse omnibuses : of gentlemen stout and sublime in frock coats, grave and dignified in public but devils on the sly. As long as the Leicester Lounge remained, the vision was fairly distinct. But the picture herewith is its elegy. For most cynical of changes, this quintessence of naughty ninetyishness is turned into a draper's shop. The rakish looking sign is being taken down. The ground floor is to become an area of plate glass, behind which waxen visages will simper. The upper half of the building is mummified with a coat of plaster that has removed the old cheerful contrasts of grimy red brick and stone decorated with grime.

You might almost expect to discern behind it figures mummified also, embalmed in the mystical gums of the 1890's, with bowler hats fixed in an eternal jauntiness and a whisky-and-soda before them, like that nourishment which the ancients were careful to provide for deceased chieftains.

But the latest fashions replace the oldest. And of wine and women is left only the latter : adorned with the brief chic of Paris : and Coventry Street becomes less like that of George R. Sims, just as the old Piccadilly Circus, which you can see at one end of it, has turned into something else. The faint delicacy of a crane hangs over the new Swan and Edgar's, and Eros is gone.

Page 39. Lunch-time in a London café

THE OLD CAFÉ ROYAL

The interior went all of a sudden, taking you unawares. The famous interior with its gilt caryatides and painted ceiling, whose smoky mirrors reflected famous profiles.

So here, for consolation, is the outside as it appeared awaiting demolition in 1927.

It was a building that always had the look of not being quite real : in the two-o'clock-in-the-morning style of architecture which was once London's principal glory.

It was made for the night, a soft London night in which its sooty perspective would float, dim, enticing.

Grimy cornices, blind windows, a false pediment, rather shabby, but all very much in the grand manner.

It was almost human : a Presence in narrow Glasshouse Street, which breathed a trifle stertorously of Romance ; like a well-trained waiter who had attended upon the Great and whose subtle smile indicated that he could have told you something about them.

Down the narrow street which is guarded by a modern baroque arch went the debonair figures, Eminent Bohemians of the Incredible Age.

You imagine the sooty grin of the façade as it listened deferentially to an epigram fall from the thick lips of Wilde.

It would watch Whistler arrive very elegant, as the American artist will be, at the head of a procession of hansom cabs, or performing a similar frolic in the taste of the period.

A relic of the late Victorian enchantment it preserved to the end a sort of decrepit dignity. Associations hung about it. The culture of the 'nineties lingered with it to its final days. The mellow memory of symposia which one assumes to have been very brilliant, of an eager world of painters, writers and musicians who look very well in perspective, leaves a gentle and not unpleasant melancholy behind.

AT THE NEW CAFÉ ROYAL

The new recreation ground of arts, letters and etceteras is imposing.

A fountain splashes in the entrance hall and stained glass windows admit a dim, artistic light.

In the café itself amidst modern decoration that recalls the splendours of the Magasins du Louvre one may sit over a tall glass of Pilsener beer and contemplate the most varied assemblage of faces in London.

Every conceivable type flits amongst the saffron and green of the walls.

And like so many Cinderellas with different bed times they fly at each silvery chime of the grandfather's clock which stands in one corner.

You may see here :

A Japanese sage in full national costume eating steak and chips.

The old type of artist who can talk until the cock crows, full of praise for the times that are past and asking rather peevishly for the snows of yester year.

The new type of artist with an anxious eye on the clock which inexorably approaches the time of the last train back to the " Northern Heights."

The provincial, whose dinner jacket sits tightly upon his sturdy form, self-consciously savouring a cigar and, flushed with unaccustomed wine, gazing with a wild surmise upon the attractions of the capital.

The gentleman upon whom the dreadful juvenility of old age is creeping, and whom every grey hair makes younger, bent on having at last a good time.

The " model " who has " sat " to the most famous illustrators of the day and been nationally, if anonymously, advertised in all the monthly magazines, making a Zolaesque gesture towards the arts over a small brandy.

A demure lady taking a lonely supper.

Bohemian bookmakers and jockeys celebrating a victory ; and occasional celebrities

H. Gaunt
1929.

The place is a kaleidoscope, a shifting panorama of all the assortments that make up post-war London ; painters and provincials, Jews and Chinamen, fat men, thin men, white-faced post-war youths, hale septuagenarians, and picturesque females arriving here in the course of the evening as if at some central railway terminus.

AT THE LORD BELGRAVE

Genuine eighteenth century strayed into the early twentieth ; indifferent to the fact that a new age has arrived and seemingly knowing nothing about it.

A world complete in itself, that does not merely maintain the past, keep it up as the " good old times," but *is* the past, lives and breathes it.

You are surrounded by eighteenth century men, solid, red-faced, heartily living, unsentimental, such as might be described in Tom Jones, waited on by eighteenth century kitchen maids and eating rosy steaks that are unquestionably those of Old England and not of New Zealand.

The Lord Belgrave maintains a table that would have pleased the eye of Rubens or Jordaens.

Vermilion beef, inches thick and gilt-edged.

Huge pies whose ochreous crust is richly carved.

Fish opalescent and palpitating with freshness.

Tender sucking pigs all pink and creamy.

A play of rich earthy colours in a varnished interior of brown and gold.

Everything so wholesome and opulent in this place which is a kind of lay Westminster Abbey with a corner for bookmakers instead of for poets.

No one caters for you—no smiling *maitre d'hotel* approaches, rubbing hands and attendant on the slightest whim.

You must fit in, accept the standard ; do your best to live up to this obscure national institution.

And you may picture to yourself amongst the burly, leisurely, dignified, taciturn customers such types as :

THE BOOKMAKER.

A square, elderly figure in bowler hat and overcoat of sober magnificence : cynical and materialist in outlook as are those who make a good thing out of the foolishness of others : and as becomes the materialist living on the fat of the land.

BOXING

THE PUGILIST.

Hard-boiled, powerful, hungry-looking, he settles down with a scowl, speaks in the briefest, sombre words, and gives the impression of a massive discontent.

THE PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMAN

with a touch of silver in his hair and a bland and mellow expression, portly, wearing rimless pince-nez, serious as to the choosing of his chop, and kindly to the white-aproned serving-maid.

For the spirit of liveliness, excitement, youth, one will no doubt look elsewhere. But here is the actuality of an Older England.

Above, the Ring, Blackfriars, and on page 48, Discussion of "le sport" in Soho

SOHO

Soho is in two parts.

(1) Those charming little restaurants which are secluded with the express purpose of being discovered, where Chianti freshly made in the cellar and fowls too long exposed to the open air provide an adventurous interlude in the lives of those who usually dine at home.

" So quaint . . . so foreign." These narrow streets and alleys are so unlike Streatham. And there is the intoxicating pleasure of talking to someone who professes to understand schoolboy French.

(2) The actual Soho that lives and is lived in, which seems more than any other district to preserve the real secret of London—the traditional quarter of artists and writers—of Canaletto, Blake, Hazlitt and de Quincey, an invincible humanity in the middle of the impersonal modern age—preserving its grimy brick in a desert of fresh concrete. Foreign, yes, but the foreigners are truer Londoners than the Londoners themselves ; they defend this tortuous citadel of ancient lanes in the modernizing West End and guard a picturesque remnant of Alsatia.

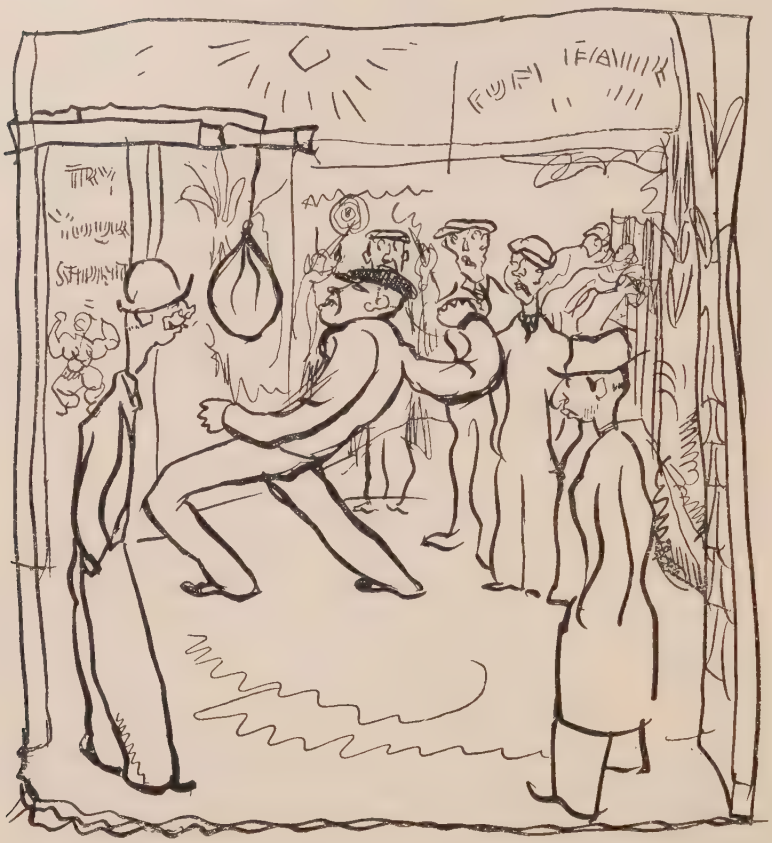
And there are cafés where all the strange characters of this strangest of cities congregate, where you are offered *soupe à l'oignon* and Camp

W. Sanders
1927.

coffee—and sit on through the hours of the night watching a pageantry of the underworld—old Bulgarians who haunt the reading room of the British museum, playing chess, Italian anarchists murmuring against society, Cockney pedlars with trays of studs and pins, swarthy little Mediterraneans with carpets slung over their shoulders, wrinkled, close-cropped characters with handkerchiefs tied round their necks, players on Jews'-harps and mandolines, who make off at the sight of a policeman, fat little women with brightly-painted faces who quarrel fiercely with one another, swaggering Semitic youths, coming and going as if with some mysterious submerged purpose the whole night through until dawn skulks over the alleys and greasy pieces of paper blow up sluggishly in the early morning breeze and criminal-looking cats that have been prowling in the dark slink off into their hiding places.

Page 52. 1 *a.m. in a Soho café*

EAST END STYLE



A modern fashion plate.

Who will dare say that the clothes of the male need lack brightness after a journey through Aldgate, Whitechapel and Limehouse : where Oriental youth recalls the gay exaggeration of the later middle ages.

In dim streets amidst blackened houses and factory walls they form groups that might have come from some sinister illumination.

Shoes taper to a point, shoes that range from the palest lemon yellow to crude burnt sienna.

Page 55. Barbarian invasion. The Cup Final

CAFÉ
BAR

Suits are bright vermilion, chocolate, and heliotrope ; and red trousers of incredible width swathe small thin legs.

Overcoats of screaming purple sing to clouded heavens, and are shaped with a grotesque closeness to the waist.

Young Simon de Montforts of the Ghetto, with brown faces and blue chins, stroll along lines of stalls where jellied eels, small trinkets and nerve tonics are sold.

Or sit talking together in steaming café-bars.

In the Tottenham Court Road you will see them in " Fun Palaces," whose walls are painted with palm trees, Mediterranean villas and beasts of the jungle.

Liquid brown eyes look through the peep-holes of machines which for a penny set in motion " Broadway Beauties," voluptuously undressing.

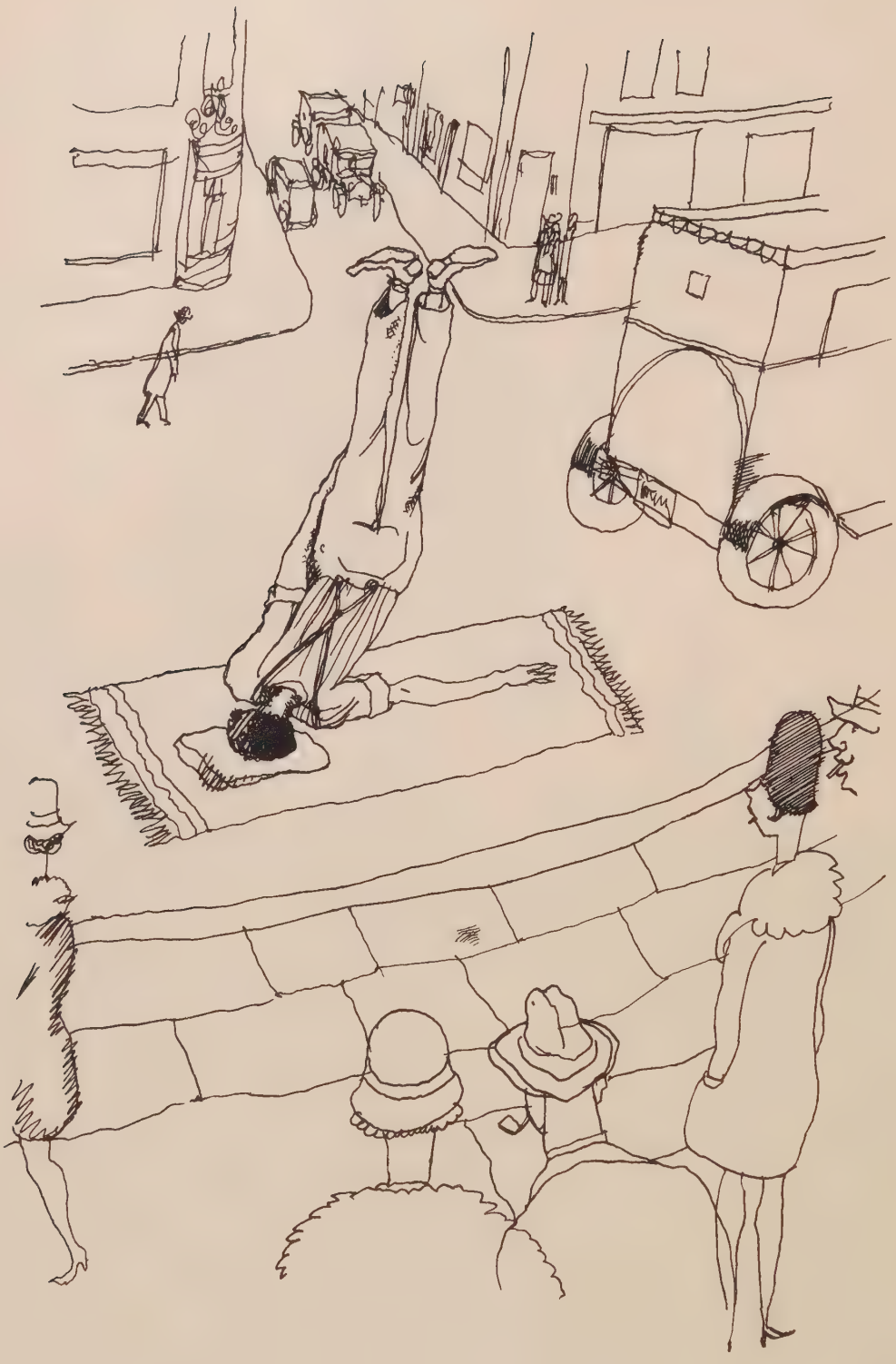
And grotesque, undersized figures with clenched teeth and frowning brows hurl themselves on punch-balls which extend the invitation to " Try your Strength."

EX-SERVICE

Ex-Servicemen at every street corner, turning the handles of automatic pianos, blowing hard into trombones, and eliciting a scraping whine from one-stringed fiddles, reproaching the social order with arrays of medals and little cards—" Disabled, no pension, three children."

Spreading little mats before theatre queues, amongst the swiftly moving traffic, skinny veterans with shirt sleeves rolled up execute displays of agility. Hola! they shout, and stand quivering on their heads, their inverted eyes anxiously fixed on impending motor-buses. And others turned over in crab fashion with swelling veins and starting eyes, circle round an orange on the top of a match-box, which they pick up between their teeth.

Page 59. *The Coliseum*



THE DERBY

The picture does not show anything of the horses, but this is quite in the spirit of the times. The noble quadruped is a pretext even at the festival for which it is the reason of existence, it is merely the *x* of the sporting equation.

" The breed is improved," but so it may be assumed is that of electric hares.

What matters is the crowd. Traditional London assembles on the Epsom Downs and forms the caricature of a *fête-champêtre.*

With a shade less éclat than in the days of Frith, ladies and gentlemen eat legs of chicken and pop champagne corks in Bentleys, instead of barouches.

The general public which has arrived in excursion trains from Charing Cross, obtains American cheese and bottles of Bass at crowded booths.

A hoarse-voiced, thimble-rigging person offers pound notes for the solution of a simple problem.

Bookmakers, well-fed, thick set and in thick overcoats, surrounded by groups of scriveners and touts, call out the " odds " in strangulated voices and make scornful chalk-marks on their boards.

Soft clouds roll along, slowly dissolving as they go. It begins to rain. Miserable looking little men, whose bowler hats form gutters down which water trickles, hold umbrellas over their patron bookmaker, giving him the aspect of a burlesque sultan, a kind of pasha in the manner of Cruickshank.

With a sad cheerfulness everyone wanders rather aimlessly.

Gypsies, aquiline, brown, with gaudy shawls and babies strapped about their backs with rags, wind in and out, smoking cigarettes, hands outstretched, voices insolently pleading.

Impressive representatives of the New Feminism, independent, strong-minded women, dip in their bags, and make bets with firm precision.

The natural gambling instinct of women is let loose ; no more delightful nonsense of fumbling with the sleeve of a male escort, and innocently asking him to put half-crown (is that what one does) on something for her.

From Tattenham Corner you look over an immense field of umbrellas, tents, pennants and placards, heads without number, emphasized here and there with a water-colour splash of red and yellow.

Occasionally a rumble goes through the air, horses' hoofs pounding, the jockeys' colours streak by, an interlude that is finished in a moment.

There remains the crowd, lacking the crispness of Victorian melodrama, containing as far as one can see no flashy villains whose all is staked on a race, but out to lose a little money with that philosophic satisfaction the British race seems always to find in losing.

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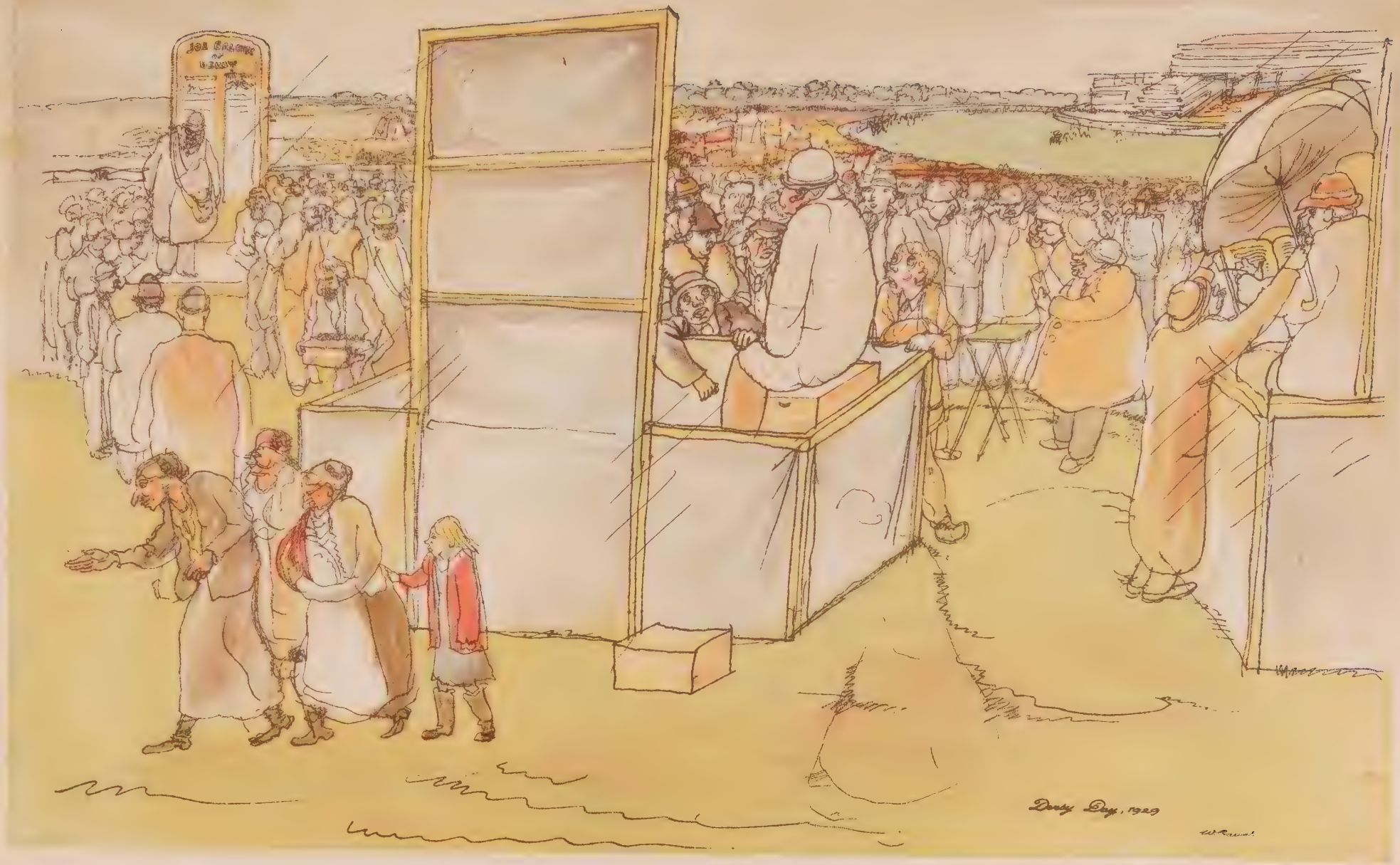
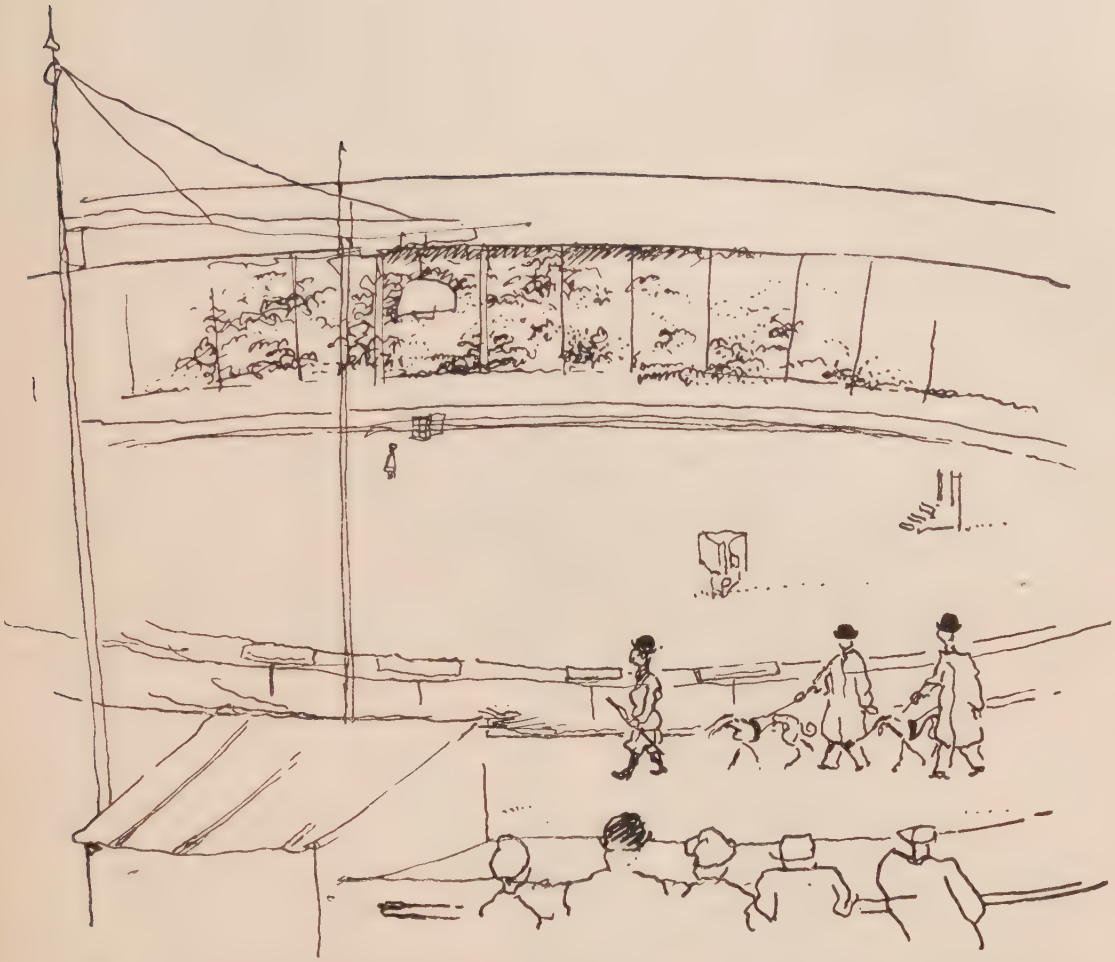
At the back of Northcliffe House.
"The 4.30 winner"


Derby Day, 1923

THE DOGS



One section of London goes regularly to " the Dogs " at Wembley from Marylebone Station on Saturday evenings, poring over copies of " The Greyhound Gazette."

The Stadium is full of people. A tiny figure in a bowler hat and a white overall stands in the middle of the field and blows a bugle. Wireless music croons gently in the evening air. A procession marches

round led by a man in leggings who carries a wand, followed by more bowler hats and white overalls, leading the dogs.

A zooming noise is heard and a wild apparition begins to flash round the course, with crackling flaming eyes like headlamps. This is the hare. The dogs pursue it. The winner receives an ovation.

The night deepens. Arc lamps make patterns of light and shade on the scene. The last race is run : and the crowd is back in town in fifteen minutes.

The whole thing is twentieth century to the last degree : impersonal, carefully humane, mechanized, and without glamour.

Above, dog fans, and on Page 67, The Law Courts

W. Gaunt.
1927.

THE PUB

At its best a thing of beauty, a home of philosophy ; and nowhere more gorgeous than in London. Amidst great varnished tubs marked with X's, rows of bottles full of translucent ruby and amber, carved ornament in mahogany that is intensely and richly brown, the gilded and decorated pomp of the Renaissance, you can meet the typical Englishman : in his castle far more than at home.

Here are wonderful faces, hooked noses, snub noses, big chins, receding chins, fat people and thin, tall and short, for though there is only one Frenchman and perhaps two Germans, Englishmen are infinitely various. And this is the place to see them their own natural selves, indulging in a mild saloon-bar symposium, happy in the discomfort which also has a certain splendour ; and enjoying with insular robustness the harsh flavours of the amusement which is their own special creation.

THE ARTISTS' "QUARTAH"

The English Montparnasse is to be found in the Tottenham Court Road district amongst Kosher restaurants, delicatessens, French bookshops, the establishments of Italian craftsmen and Welsh dairies without number.

The drawing-rooms of what in Anthony Trollope's time was a very genteel district make a spacious setting for painters. The house where Constable died is just along the street. And in the tavern not far away are to be met those who maintain the great Anglo-Saxon institution founded by Henri Murger under the title of " La vie de Bohème."

Here are corduroy jackets, broad-brimmed hats, and gypsy scarves, persistently picturesque to the tune of an automatic piano and in the aroma of pre-war absinthe. And one finds young students from the Slade School venturing out into the alluring perspective with timid delight, expatriates returning who carry everywhere with them the atmosphere of the Dome and the Rotonde, and a number of the odd people who in London find Bohemianism attractive as a distinct social order and a mode of life with fixed and definite regulations of its own.

THE LONG BAR

For men only. Correct pronunciation, "The Long Baw." It is guarded by a commissionaire whose eye has something of the stern indulgence of a porter at a college, and hidden from vulgar (or feminine) gaze by a discreetly curving corridor.

The only lady in it apart from those who serve behind the "baw" is made of bronze and upholds a torch in one of its extremely ornate corners. The "Long Baw" is a seat of Empire and protracted adolescence. Here East is Anglo-Indian, and the West, Public School, and the twain are sure of meeting.

A central rendezvous for Mandalay and Lombard Street.

The sentiment of Arnold and Kipling in Shaftesbury Avenue.

TYPES

The Warrior.

Red face. Small bristling moustache. Parade-ground voice. Just back from somewhere and strongly suspects (by gad) that things have "gone to the dogs" in his absence. Has a nasty look in his eye for those who are not "pukka sahibs," that ineffable order of human beings to which he himself belongs.

The West End.

Always beautifully groomed and always "about." Bland and affable in manners and full of information as to the course of events within the mile round Piccadilly Circus of which he is the presiding genius. The many-eyed Argus of the clubs, and a sort of dapper Mercury.

Young Men of Leisure

Lineal descendants of the Jolly Dogs of the 'seventies, the Champagne Charlies of the 'nineties and the Piccadilly Johnnies of the early nineteen hundreds. Male butterflies, who maintain the value of being useless in an earnest world of guardians and trustees. Life for them is a perpetual night out.

Their definition of the shortest distance between two points is from the Trocadero to the Alhambra.

Their ambition is to be thrown out of somewhere.

Public School in Business.

Very spruce and distinguished by striped ties which indicate their place of origin, they project themselves sentimentally back into the halcyon period of their earlier youth.

Conversations.

" Couldn't stand the place. Fellows weren't Sahibs, if you know what I mean . . ."

" Well, chaps, what's the drill ? "

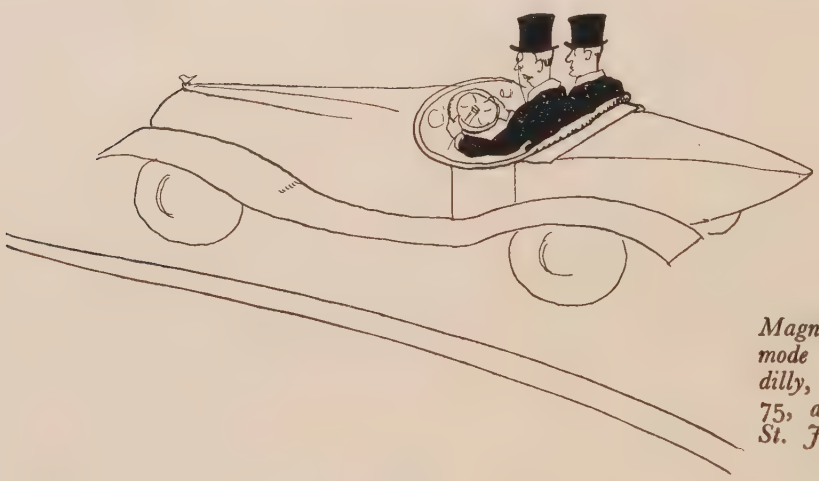
" What about knocking back a can of rough . . . ? "

" Oh, thanks. I'll have a chota peg."

" I say, Douglas, lend me a fiver, will you . . . "

" Have you heard this one ? Straight from the Stock Exchange . . ."

" Were you at Biggleswade ? What House . . ? "



Magnificence à la mode in Piccadilly, and, Page 75, a corner of St. James's Sq.

TRIPAN
JOHN PU
Willings

SIGNS AT PICCADILLY CIRCUS

At the rapidly-changing centre of the world nothing seems to remain fixed except a small bastion of old buildings covered with the skeleton framework of electric signs. Unlike Broadway, of course, but with a cheerfulness of their own. At night the sky gradates into a deep velvety smoke-laden blue. On the rich pall the words Booth's Gin spring into sparkling life and an electric cocktail shaker pours foaming electric lamps into a glass. The Army Club Major scintillates a monocle and smokes incessant cigarettes, the wheels of the Overland Car spin brightly round, while Cannes coruscates on a Regency façade in electric reds and greens.

And during the day the signs make a curious black scaffolding full of intricate detail

COCKTAILS

The cocktail in that triumphant progress round the world, which has established a link between the most diverse countries, has naturally enough found a place in London.

Here is the Bar Americain with a difference. Colonels, Majors and Captains who fought in the "great war" assemble and exchange reminiscences over a drink which has something of the quick and volatile nature of the period and is perhaps the only one appropriate.

"Yes, poor old so-and-so (gulp) Stopped one at Ypres."

But already the martial generation is growing old; and we are taking once more to sipping sherry.

FILM CLUB

A gallery of types, not in the human but in the screen sense, each with a characteristic gesture, intonation or facial expression. The film conceptions of humanity turned into a *tableau vivant*, and obeying the fixed and mechanical laws of their structure. An *Elderly Peer* who, as is the nature of elderly peers on the pictures, is always in evening dress, with a white moustache that is definitely of the old school, drooping courteously in conversation, very urbane and a little vacant in features, according to the ideals of English life which prevail in the United States.

The Mother. Matriarchal type of all film mothers, whose silvered head and look of sad possessive devotion goes, it may confidently be said, straight to the great heart of the public.

The Crook. A small man with a sneer who chews a match-stick as he leans his elbows on the table and with narrowed eyes contemplates an imaginary victim.

The Commissar. Bearded, wild-eyed, with unkempt hair, in a suit of revolutionary tweed—the dread deputy of the Tcheka.

The Middle-European hero-villain with an eye-glass, whose dashing manners with the fairer sex conceal a thrilling ferocity.

The Fat Man, beaming, chuckling, gleeful image of film corpulence.

The Professor . . . all the romantic conceptions, demi-gods, bogey-men and fetishes of the age, drinking tea, eating buns, reading news-papers, and waiting for something to turn up.

BOHEMIAN TAVERN IN BLOOMSBURY

Not far from the British Museum.

In lower Bohemia, the penumbra of life in London.

The pace is crescendo. More and more people press into the place until it becomes hard to stand upright. Discomfort prevails but the English love discomfort. Men tread heavily on your feet, beer is spilt down the back of your neck. You are pushed this way and that. Face after face cranes inwards, bearded faces, bleary faces, haggard faces, craning with a blind impulsion towards the semicircle of the bar.

You are sucked into the quivering congested mass of human jelly, germ-like, minuscules under a microscope.

Through the mass darts a little waiter dodging, ducking, squirming, calling MIND YOUR BACKS, GENTLEMEN, PLEASE.

The phrase is a motto, a catchword.

MIND your backs.

The pace quickens and quickens and the scene is Saturnalian. A brutal roar of conversation gets louder and hangs like an invisible cloud across which shoot yells, shrieks, curses, howls, and the sounds of glass breaking.

Crash. A tumbler tinkles off the table, smashes on the floor is crunched and splintered beneath rocking feet. Benches are dabbled with sticky runlets of beer. The air is stifling and in its weird stagnation a sort of demoniac energy is bred that rises to a final and unutterable frenzy.

TIME, GENTLEMEN, PLEASE.

Types.

The Genius who missed the Bus.

One of the numerous company whose reputation for a surpassing ability strengthens itself owing to the fact that no evidences of it are ever actually forthcoming. This genius is a victim of humanity at large and meets others of his kind in the amicable equality of failure and in the atmosphere of being banded together against a monstrous conspiracy of misunderstanding. Loves to feel that he is somehow

W. Counts
1929

creating merely by virtue of being a participant in this nightly Bacchanal : and has indeed developed a contempt for these who go to the vulgar length of actually producing anything.

The Gentleman Journalist. A young man from a university who is determined at all costs to be dissipated and feels that here he is really "seeing life," with an innocent belief in picturesque fictions and a naive air of raffishness.

The Hack. Resigned, humorous, disillusioned, hard working but slightly tottery. The leaves of a manuscript may generally be seen bulging from the pocket of his shabby overcoat, some little job of embellishment on whose title page his name will not appear.

The Female Bohemian. Indeterminate both as to age and occupation and got up to look gypsyish with a spotty scarf and a fancy skirt, she is one of a number of sprightly ladies whose natural distaste for rigidity of principle is fortunate in coinciding with the fashionable modern tendency. A little artificial colouring matter, both in dress and conduct, enable her to cut a figure that is vaguely "artistic," but does not commit her to anything.

A PARTY ON A SHIP

The ship lies at anchor off the Embankment and it is understood to be the correct rendezvous for parties amongst those who take pleasure in the exquisite refinements of social amusement which provide good copy for the newspapers.

Bloomsbury rules the waves.

Mariners from Mayfair and sirens of South Kensington dance in the shadow of the Charing Cross Railway Bridge.

The Press photographer mingles with the guests. Fox-trots are punctuated with magnesium flares. The paragraphist is on the watch. And the public, full of wistful dreams of Trimalchian banquets, feels next day a stir of delighted indignation.

The Bright Young People at it again !

BILLY BENNETT AT THE KIT-CAT

To describe Billy Bennett as he appears at the Kit-Cat is to go some way towards describing the genius of the English race—the native genius. The quality of being on an island and of being unlike anything else on earth. To imagine him in America or in any other country is impossible. He is the comic figure which is enshrined in the heart of the Englishman alone. In a sense he is the typical Englishman.

In a theatre you will see him against the background of those mellow conventions of the English stage, a Bloomsbury Square or the Holborn Viaduct. Set amongst an array of dazzling shirt fronts and brilliant dresses he becomes colossal, a monument of folk-genius, with a drooping black moustache, uttering in a hoarse voice the incomprehensible English sentiments of the music hall.

Incomprehensible : because it is hard to define the mockery which is so earnest in its tone ; the rich pattern of vulgar commonplaces, the flavour which has no equivalent in words. Here is the satirical patriot, juxtaposing the spiritual and the material.

" But we must preserve the Union Jack,
We must preserve the old flag.
Our honour's not lost, but think of the cost
With moth balls at twopence a bag."

Quaint conceits that approach, now those of Shakespeare and Donne, now the fantastic rearrangement of images of the surrealist.

" There was Toad-in-the-Hole but the toad has crawled out
And we can't get it back in the garage."

'Arry on the Boulevards romantically exploring the Englishman's Paris.

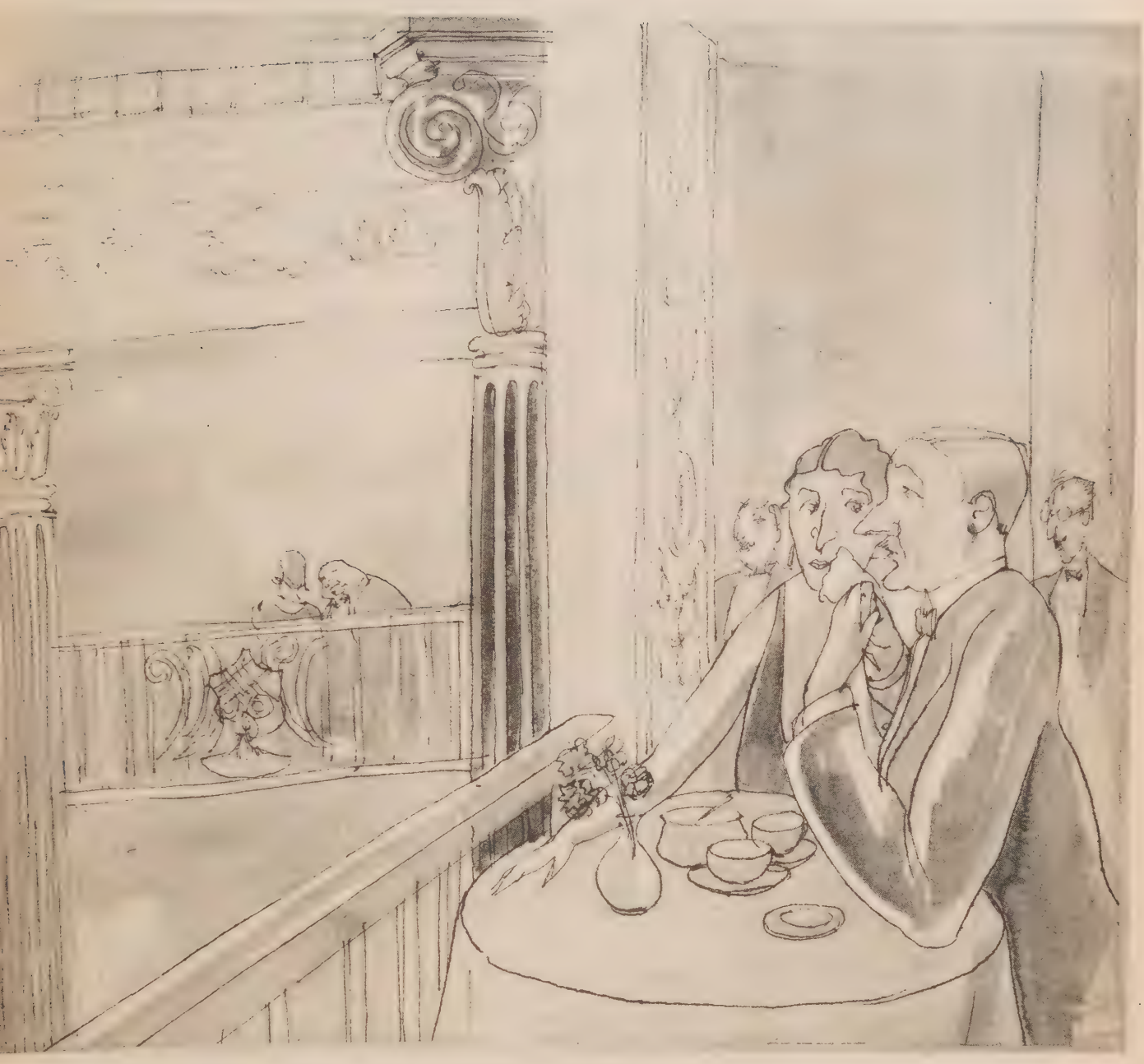
" I shall never forget
The day when I met
Allumette of the Follies Bergee."

The imperial Englishman in whom a ridiculous homeliness dies hard

" On the road to Mandalay
Where you'll see the fried fish play."

In all his incarnations Mr. Bennett remains an Englishman, placing parodies within parodies like sets of cardboard boxes, and retaining in his wildest moments the subtle fiction of being very ordinary, harmless and pathetic.

At left, " Almost a Gentleman." Page 91. On the balcony at the Kit-Cat Restaurant



THE HOGARTH ROOM

ART IN SEASON

For every taste there is something in London. At the Academy chaste but well-turned nudes, grouse moors in water-colour and celebrities both in pigment and in the pink.

Elsewhere more Spartan fare and more rarified ether—cubes, dynamism, surrealism.

Above. Private View at the Royal Academy, and on Page 92, a study in surrealism at a London gallery

And London on a sunny June day with the downcast, reverent glances of one walking through a cemetery does its best with each species of entertainment, searching in its mind for the appropriate thing to say.

Stately old gentlemen with knees bent are peering into Pre-Raphaelite minutiæ, languid young men are rapt before the latest expressions of the modern spirit.

Conversations

" Now do you think that splash in the corner is meant to be symbolic of something ? "

" Painters like Rembrandt knew their job, sir."

" I don't know what the world is coming to at all. Those *frightful* pictures."

" Isn't that too sweet, exactly like the place we stayed at last summer."

" That is so very expressive, don't you think ? "

" It's abstract. You see what I mean . . "

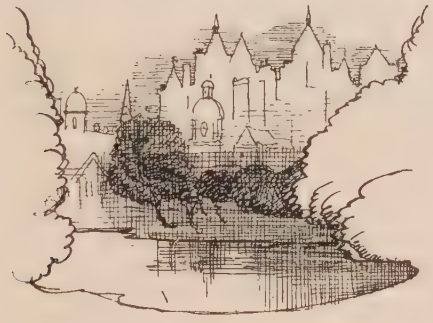
Above, appreciation of modern art, and on Page 95, Behind the National Gallery

RURAL LONDON

In spite of its immensity and squalor London preserves here and there a placid rural community.

In Great College Street, Westminster, there is no noise. It is like the well-kept main street of a village, overhung with great chestnut trees, undisturbed by the passage of any traffic, with graceful old houses, leisured, orderly, full of charm.

You are in the heart of the Empire, a few minutes' walk from the Houses of Parliament and Victoria Street, and you might be in the heart of Sussex with sheep bleating on the Downs at the back of the houses.



Above, Whitehall from St. James's Park and Page 96, Great College Street, Westminster

A party in Bloomsbury

12.30 A.M. AT THE TOUR EIFFEL

The Tour Eiffel shines at the end of the grim length of Fitzroy and Charlotte Street like a beacon equally to struggling artists and restaurateurs.

It is the English Temple of Fame.

A new edition of Henri Murger (greatly revised and brought up to date). Bohemia wafted up in Glory.

THE EIFFEL TOWER HAS GOT IT

A little way down the road you can dine for 9d., but in that case you don't get the atmosphere and atmosphere counts for a lot.

This is where the blood of the arts runs blue, and the gossip writers hunt their prey.

You can hear the lions' roar through a discreet little jungle which grows in a big brass bowl ; amidst the shrill twitterings of the smaller fauna of Bloomsbury.

The lights are soft and rosy, there is good wine on the table, the pictures on the walls are good, and if you are good, too, Mr. Stulick will come and talk to you.

PATRONS

The Great Artist.

Leonine, shaggy, deep-chested, superb in taciturnity. A King of the Beasts in the gentle captivity of rosy lights and adulation.

The Wit.

It is perhaps a little old-fashioned to be witty, so The Wit has the air that is termed " old-world." He likes an audience and contrives to pitch his voice to a droll, penetrating timbre that can be heard all over the room. Of him may it indeed be remarked that " It's not so much what he says, it's the way he says it." His gestures are well-timed, and even the waiters smile diplomatically in the judicious intervals left for applause.

The Highbrow.

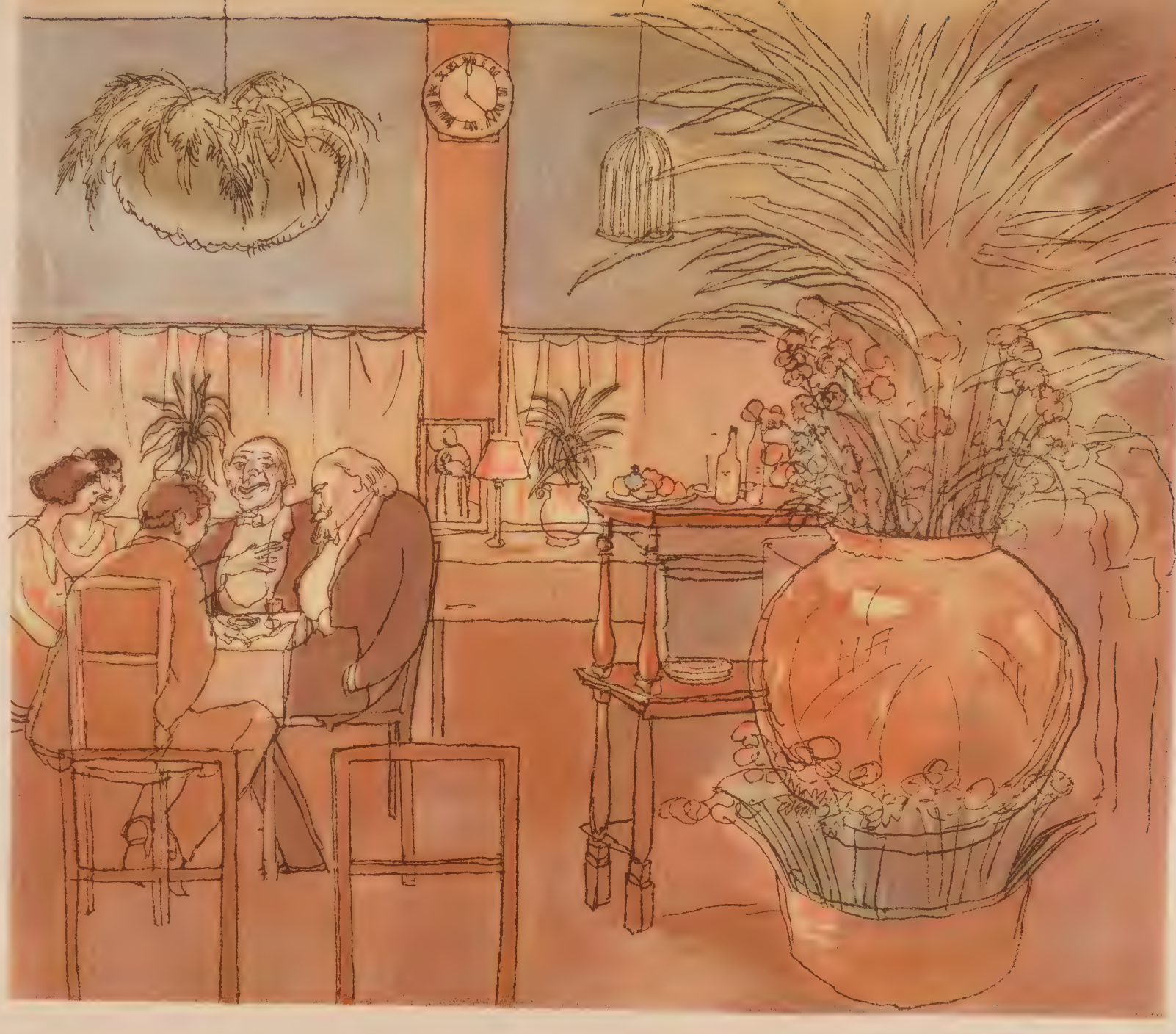
A sallow young man with dark hair who talks rather quickly in a high querulous tone. Wearing an expression of frosty disdain, he carries about with him the fragile secret of a taste so exquisite that it cannot be explained, and of a language reduced to the most cryptic notation. He never argues for he has the calm certainty of being always right ; and he enjoys this condition by virtue of trimming his sails to the prevailing æsthetic wind so that he knows precisely when to veer towards Matisse and when to jettison Derain.

Conversational Fragments.

" Of co-u-r-s-e, the trouble is-s-s, when Ay go-o-o-o to the the-a-a-tre, to see some *per*-fectly ridiculous pla-a-a-a-y. . . . .

" Ach, I lofe my leetle dog : und he lofes me. I talk viz im though ze telephon und he hear me at ze ozzer end, und he bark, und ven I go avay, I send im a postcart every day. But no, he vill not eat until I goom back . . . "

" My dear—too, too, perfect . . ."



LONDON SOCIETY

Cast-iron balconies are peeling and unpainted. The houses of Victorian nabobs become ruinous. There is an evident disappearance of the marbled floors and columns of the Style Edouard Sept. Signs up, " This magnificent site for disposal " among great new sarcophagi of flats, raw and monotonous against leaden skies : but there is still real splendour in London.

There are Adam houses that are reminders of the old classical elegance, with fine proportions and aristocratic reserve of façade, sweeping staircases, painted oval panels of gods and goddesses : plaster ornament exquisitely curving, acres of carpet and huge windows : still one is happy to say inhabited by private persons.

And there is still a little of that Society which prior to the great disturbance of English life which began in 1914 was a magnificent consolidated body, setting a standard of taste and graceful living, the patron of Arts and Letters : persisting, as if the new Society had not come down in the world, split into groups, cliques, individuals, found it fashionable to be poverty-stricken, chic to live in a mews, " a cottage with a double coach-house, a cottage of gentility," to practise rather than patronize the arts, and abandon by degrees its essential leisure.

THE CHOP-HOUSE

The chop-house is so close to Piccadilly Circus that you could stand in its doorway, and if so minded throw a stone through one of the stained glass windows of the Regent Palace Hotel. The fact is remarkable, because it is remarkable that in 1930 there should be a chop-house at all, especially at the very hub of the universe: and one which has few (if any) American visitors : and projects you so perfectly back in 1840. And yet—there you are—a genuine piece of Victorian Life in full working order—a Dickens " bit " that is real.

Its customers are not sightseers come to see " the picturesque quarters of your wonderful old city." They are regular customers with immutable Dickensian habits, looking for the most part as if they were called Noggs, Swiveller, Tulkinghorn, Cheeryble, or some such Victorian name.

The waiters are not French, Swiss, German, Italian or Spanish : but Anglo-Dickens waiters with frockcoats that have gone green with age. And every now and then one of them will come forward and tell you his tip for to-morrow's race in a confidential murmur, and pensively jingling a little small change will confess his winnings and losses, principally losses, for the past week.

You sit in pews richly polished with age and eat off the bare wooden surface of the table.

At the end of each pew is a narrow receptacle from which the sporting pages of all the newspapers, rather greasy and crumpled, project, and are seized on from time to time by clients.

The floor is wooden and sanded over. The crockery is solid and heavy as if made to withstand the most severe usage and, if possible, last for ever.

The low dark-coloured beams of the ceiling, the naked lights, the glazed tiles on the wall, the old-fashioned bill of fare, contribute to the sensation of age.

Women are infrequent. The chop-house dates back to the pre-feminine age and preserves its masculine conventions.

It breathes the very essence of the 'forties, kindly, personal London, a little bit down at heel and whimsically philosophic over a bad job, native to fogs and gas lamps and kippers and tea

NIGHT IN WARDOUR STREET

"In my young days," Music Hall song

Down the gay squalid little street walk ladies who belong to what counsel with a characteristic delicacy terms "a certain profession."

Relics of the good old days when virtue required an opposite in order to be a virtue and every Angel in the House was exactly complemented by an Unfortunate at the Street Corner. You see them after the shops are closed in the evening adjusting a garter in a doorway or adding an extra streak of carmine to already brightly carmined lips.

As you walk along devious side turnings, the words "Hullo, dearie," breathe huskily in the air, detaining hands paw at the coat-sleeve and

Page 112. Archbishop Tenison's School, the site of Hogarth's house

a sardonic chuckle follows retreating footsteps. A sullen group worthy of Carpaccio stands by a draper's window in which waxen statuary is gracefully poised beaming with an eternal graciousness and wide unchanging eyes at the passers-by, gesticulating with cereous fingers that taper to a fine point. And beams of light that illuminate these idealistic forms illuminate also other forms, watchful realities.

Some are old and fat, merry and brazen, with dusky oily skins, waddling grotesquely.

Others are stealthy and furtive and look out of the corners of their eyes and slink along like cats.

The young ones swagger bravely with a hard defiance.

They are dressed in finery which has a note of bizarre ostentation. Their coarsening faces are chalked with powder and their eyes elongated with blue and black cosmetics.

When it rains they patrol the drenched and almost deserted pavement beneath umbrellas.

Over them hangs a curious air of dejection, a sense of not being quite in the spirit of the times.

For it is said that the contrast once so effective has become a bit of a bore : that the Angels in the Houses have taken wing, and the oldest profession in the world is getting out of date.

AT COLLINS'S MUSIC HALL

The genius of the old music-hall taking flight at last from its native shores pauses a valedictory moment amidst the clanging trams and cobbled street of Islington.

At Collins's, wistful little stray from the rowdy, rackety days.

Husky-voiced comediennes are giving a final twirl to the frills of 1903, a parting wink to their admirers, a last suggestive leer.

Red-nosed funny men are singing a Cockney swan-song.

There is a shade of pathos in the gallant stand for its native tradition. In its bar, mellow with faded red plush, yellowed photographs of bygone stars signed in the flowing theatrical handwriting of the early years of the century; rococo woodwork.

In its patch-work quilt curtain with advertisements for local pork-butchers, milliners and moneylenders.

The moment is so historic that it has got into the newspapers. A slight current of fashion has set towards Islington and a disciple or two of the Russian Ballet lounges now and then in a stage box.

You may see a veteran of seventy on the boards. Mr. Charles Coborn, "himself, personally," singing the triumphs of his prime. "The Man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo."

> "As I walked along the Boy de Boulong
> With an *in*dependent air—(AIR echoes the audience)
> You could hear the girls declare (Hurrah !)
> He must be a millionaire (Pom-Pom),"

or equally famous . . .

> "Tew Lavly Black Eyes
> A-o-h ! *wot* a surprise !
> Ownly fer tellin' a man 'e was wrong
> Tew Lavly Black Eyes."

What gusto! What unction! What easy, practised gestures of the old dramatic convention. Those were the days, alas.

The audience is after Hogarth.

It is so English that in 1930 it has become almost foreign. There is The Perfect Cockney : with a knotted red handkerchief round the throat, hair parted in the middle and a greased lock in front to mark the division, wide mouth, low, slanting forehead, snub nose and protruding lower lip.

And those horny-handed old ladies of London, with motherly bosoms and frolicsome laughs, " partial to a drop o' gin dearie," and making the most of Saturday night.

Their lips move with the pattern of old-time songs. Their faces extend in innocent, simple laughter at the broad-humours of a bygone age. They are part of the tradition.

BAR

THE CORNER HOUSE

Marmoreal magnificence for the many. A bonbon bourbon architecture to which every Louis has contributed. The most marbly marble in London like ripe Stilton cheese through which course luscious green veins.

Soulful filling music pervades the odorous vastnesses of these halls, which recede in a grandiose perspective, revealing constantly further perspectives of swirling ornate ceilings and gilt pilasters.

Page 120. *Daly's Theatre and the Hippodrome*

On every floor, and in the basement, orchestras perform astounding feats of virtuosity, enchanting the immense concourse, now with selections from Gilbert and Sullivan, now wandering into Waldteufel and now striking up an Irish jig.

It is the one place where you can eat a Welsh rarebit to the tune of "It's a long way to Tipperary": flavour an ice-cream with Pagliacci: and take breakfast from one in the morning onwards.

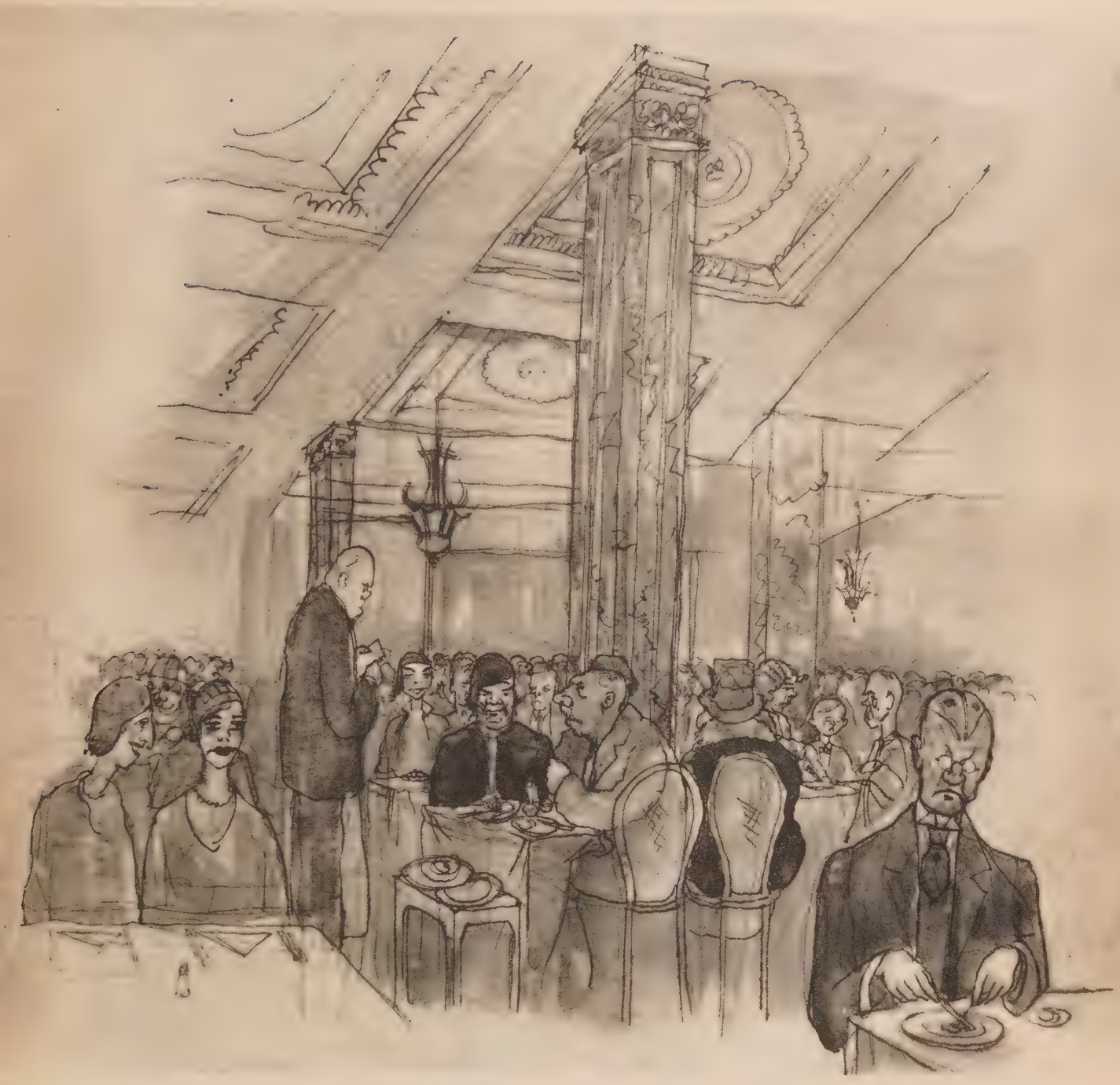
Red-faced men who have come up from the North for the day, gaze in awe at the evidences of metropolitan culture which surround them.

Their spouses, all crinkly in black, toy with gaily coloured salads.

" Eh, such a grand pleeace."

Young women, whose clothes improve upon the latest fashion in being more highly coloured and startling to the eye, sit and giggle over sundaes.

And here from morning till night, from twelve p.m. to twelve p.m. you will encounter The Great Public in all its aspects. The Public of Wigan and Pekin, of Chalk Farm and Chicago, its many heads forming a human sea: the whole just as it might be in one of Mr. Arnold Bennett's fantasias—" No gratuities. Stupendous ! "



COUNTY FIRE OFFICE

THE LONDON PAVILION AND SCOTTS'

C. B. Cochran and oysters.

On your left: the abode of the last flickers of the legitimate stage, where are played those remarkable productions which contain a bit of everything and every country and yet would be impossible anywhere but in London.

English culture, polished to the last degree of brilliance and refined almost to the vanishing point.

The last word in eclecticism.

The roaring forties, the naughty nineties, the ultra-sophisticated twenties in one ingenious amalgam.

Page 124. *Dome of the new Fire Office at Piccadilly Circus*

The Russian Ballah and rhyming couplets ; Californy and Brighton; masks and American oil-cloth by Oliver Messel.

Dishes for the jaded palate though possibly caviare to generals.

On your right : The fashionable Gothic aquarium where crustacea are precious things and a supper of fish is a solemn rite.

Architecture : A theatrical backcloth. A gay mixture of startling forms. The fine old Regency recipe golden with stucco, pilastered and studded with brightly-coloured posters and signs. And the romantic vision of a Victorian architect who believed that a touch of Tudor makes the whole world kin. When the colourless light of an early summer morning in London wells up in the East one can see poetry in this madness. The delicate tracery sparkles and scintillates. Purity of style would be out of place in this soft mystery of light ; and even the L.C.C. lamp-post plays its part in the charming discordance.

SCOTTS
SCOTTS

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

This shop is only a few hundred yards from Piccadilly Circus. Its catalogue says that it has been called the most amazing shop in London. It probably is. Balzac or Dickens might have taken hundreds of pages to describe it. It contains a disintegrating universe.

Here are the intimate nothings, the worthless trifles of the past, the things no one ever bothered about, not sepulchred in modern show cases, spruced up and ticketed with descriptive labels, but wallowing in original dust, chaotic, fragmentary, unrelated.

You never know what you will find in this genuine relic of Old London. It may be : little models of sailing ships with broken spars and cording in rickety glass cases. A watchman's rattle. A pair of shoes with high heels painted red. Cup and ball such as the fops of a bygone age used to carry with them to relieve an assumed boredom. Coins struck in the forties to commemorate the opening of a railway. Scrap-books with the names of Harriet and Angelina written in a sloping Italian hand and containing pressed flowers, views of the Great Exhibition and pretty pencil drawings of woodland scenery. The diary of an economical country gentleman of 1780 who carefully noted the prices he paid for food and labour : fashion plates of ladies in the charming extravagances of 1875 : prints of the Victorian ballet with glittering spangles pasted on the costume of the dancers : zoetropes, precursors of the cinema, with coloured pictures of gentlemen riding that wind round a spool. Silhouettes of 1830 in cracked oval frames : mugs chipped round the edges with cock-fighting scenes painted on them : the lithographed covers of Victorian and Edwardian songs. Lottie Collins in " Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay." Dan Leno as The Barrister : " the judge cried, the jury cried, I cried, we all cried ! And then the prisoner went and confessed. That lost me the case."

Pictures of incredibles, with Dundreary whiskers and flashing Victorian smiles, gathering posies " at Covent Garden in the morning." Plates recording the introduction of the " twopenny post " and the wireless telegraph. Cracked globes that have long ceased to revolve. Miniature bibles an inch square, published early in the present century : children's toys of 1800 : and, unique gem of the collection, Queen Elizabeth's corsets ! !

Before such an assemblage of unconsidered trifles, a sentimental midden heaped high, the moralist (if to-day there is any such person) may reflect on the curious persistence of the impermanent and the invincible magpie oddity of human beings

TOYS AND GAMES
JEWELLERY
WORK

THE RIVER

The river—the noble Thames—once alive with darting wherries, plying from many wharves, the aqueous pageant which Canaletto painted, the inspirer of Wordsworth's sonnet is forgotten, as if it were too obvious a theme for the casual city to elaborate. It is left deserted with a crumbling and ruinous grandeur lining the Surrey bank and a wide boulevard to the north which no one uses.

Every now and then, when crossing a railway bridge or on the top of a bus, you see for a moment a breath-taking panorama of the river immense and silent, thrusting its lonely way through teeming London—a breadth in the middle of narrowness, lending effect to the incredible silhouettes which loom on either side. From Chelsea to Greenwich

Page 132. *Old Lambeth Bridge*

is a continuous epic of discovery, a barge here with a big brown sail, there a sinister alley with high weeping walls and frightening porticos that leads to a flight of green and muddy steps washed by black water, visions of factories with Gothic turrets and pinnacles and endless ogive windows, lonely quays covered with a feeble and patchy growth of grass, rows of little early nineteenth-century cottages with a bay-windowed pub at one corner, decaying bridges of iron and stone ; the green-painted curves of the Albert Bridge, the weird turrets of the Cannon Street Railway Station, slimy tunnels.

At night the street lamps are reflected in long steely lines and lights flow over the bridges like phosphorescent water ; Colgate's Shaving Cream hangs blazing in the darkness and the Savoy, the Adelphi and the Cecil are luminous palaces.

On all of which London indifferently turns its back. And in one of those curious lacunæ which occur in the symphonic noise of the capital you can sometimes hear in the West End with a shock of surprise and an overwhelming sense of incongruity, the lovely mournful note of a foghorn as a ship makes its way out to sea.

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